DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 337 CS 211 397

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TITLE A Predictive Framework for Determining How Journalists Determine News.
PUB DATE Jul 88
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (79th, Portland, OR, July 2-5, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Current Events; *Journalism; Mass Media Role; Models; *News Reporting; *News Writing; Public Opinion
IDENTIFIERS Gatekeeper Role; *Journalists; News Topics; News Values

ABSTRACT

To determine how to articulate a concrete definition of the substance of the journalist's occupation, this paper offers a propositional framework of news value based on Kurt Lewin's gatekeeper model. First, the paper follows the established suggestion that news decisions are best studied from a gatekeeping perspective or that "news is whatever journalists say it is." After a discussion of the importance of news decisions and a review of three major types of theoretical models for defining news, an attempt is made to define news in terms of a series of propositional statements and to take a broad look at influences on news judgments. Based on the three models and previous atheoretical research findings, the paper proposes three main dimensions of news value to influence the news decisions made by journalists. These include professional factors, organizational factors, and personal factors. The paper suggests that the framework of propositions describing news judgments center around two constructs: importance and interest. The paper adds that the propositional framework offered, while short of a theory, does suggest an incorporation of other perspectives and disciplines into the study of news decisions. By relating news decisions to the dimensions of interest and importance, the question becomes how the journalists define those terms and what influences those definitions. (One hundred and nineteen references are appended.) (MS)

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A PREDICTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR DETERMINING HOW JOURNALISTS DETERMINE NEWS

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CS211357

Paper presented at the Theory and Methodology Division, Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, July 1988.

ABSTRACT

This paper follows the established suggestion that news decisions are best studied from a gatekeeping perspective or that "news is whatever journalists say it is." It improves on existing gatekeeper conceptualizations by systematically incorporating the many relevant studies into a single predictive framework. The empirical literature is organized into a set of empirically testable propositions relating news values to professional, organizational, and personal influences acting upon journalists.

A PREDICTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR DETERMINING HOW JOURNALISTS DETERMINE NEWS

News occupies a central place in the daily lives of many people in this country. News, in all its various forms, is the way most people come to know about that part of their lives for which they have little or no direct contact. It is primarily for this reason that news receives special protection by law, is controlled by government policy, and receives special scrutiny from citizen and academic organizations (Brucker, 1966). Even if one denies the importance or the impact of news, based on a "null effects" (Klapper, 1960) conceptualization of exposure to the mass media, news can still be considered important because it is big business and because its collection, dissemination, and consumption involve considerable time, energy, and resources (Abel, 1981).

Despite its magnitude, defined in terms of either social importance or size of business, news remains a relatively ambiguous entity. Even professional journalists, whose job it is to collect and disseminate news, are surprisingly unable to articulate a concrete definition of the substance of their occupation. This latter conclusion is based on the results of two national studies conducted, in part, to determine how journalists define news (Burgoon, Burgoon, & Atkin, 1982a; 1982b).

This paper attempts a solution to these shortcomings by offering a propositional framework of news value based on Lewin's (1947, 1951) gatekeeper model. After discussing the importance of news decisions and reviewing previous attempts to develop theoretical models, a number of propositions are derived based on reports of studies using methodologies ranging from experimentation to personal experience.

Why a theory of news value?

Much of the interest in journalists' news judgments seems to follow from the assumption that those decisions impact public opinion. Walter Lippmann

(1920, 1922) argues that news judgments are important because they impact the stereotypes people form of the world and because of the subsequent effect those images have on public opinion and democratic action. According to Lippmann, the democratic model in this country has its roots in the Aristotelian ideal of an informed citizenry and is best suited for a world in which the causes and effects of important events are within the range of public attention and experience.

While such an ideal environment might have existed during the early years of American democracy, Lippmann points out that in 1922 the world was too complex and too fleeting to be apprehended or comprehended via direct experience. Therefore, the Miltonian ideal that truth will win out over falsehood in a free market of discussion is obsolete unless an institution is available to assemble and disseminate relevant information. In modern society, such a service is generally provided by the news media. As Lippmann writes:

> "Universally, it is admitted that the press is the chief means of contact with the unseen environment. And, practically everywhere it is assumed that the press should do spontaneously for us what the primitive democracy imagined each of us could do spontaneously for himself, that every day and twice a day it will present us with a true picture of all the outer world in which we are interested" (1922, p. 203).

Sociologist Robert Ezra Park agrees with Lippmann concerning the importance of news judgments. Park (1955a, 1955b, 1967a, 1967b) views the individual as the center of a private world, the limit of which is formed by the inputs of communication with the environment. In primitive society, the individual's universe is restricted to that information available via direct experience or interpersonal discussion. In modern societies, the mass media greatly expand the boundaries of the individual's environment by increasing the range of available information. News also helps orient the individual in modern society by marking changes in the environment and by shaping responses to such changes. Taking a societal perspective, he argues that news partially establishes the

agenda for the public discussion upon which public opinion is dependent.

Tuchman (1978) agrees with Park that news serves to orient or coordinate individuals in a complex and otherwise atomized society. Tuchman adds that news is a social institution in that it is the institutional means of informing members of society. Her writings about the role and importance of news appear consistent with what Lasswell (1948) labeled the orientation and coordination function of the mass media and what Wright (1960) labeled surveillance. In essence, the news media make information available to geographically and sociologically separated individuals. Such a sharing of information within a cultural unit is obviously important for group action.

Tuchman (1978) and Park (1967b) also suggest that the recording of an event as news tends to give it a "public character" and to some extent validates its existence as fact. Park argues that information circulated informally via rumor or gossip tends to accumulate or lose detail, a "sharpening" and "leveling" effect empirically demonstrated in rumor studies (Allport & Postman 1947). Park claims, however, that while the rumor tends to over time take the form of legend, news reports are considered objective fact unless countered by subsequent reports. Tuchman adds that news is an institutional product that achieves the status of fact partially because of the media's tendency to report only observable information that is at least theoretically verifiable.

The influence news is assumed to have on public opinion also makes it a subject of interest to public relations professionals. Their interest is based on the assumption that successfully portraying relevant information as news is a mainstay of the public relations trade (Cutlip & Center, 1982), and it is generally accepted that the key to success as a publicist rests in understanding how journalists define news. Public relations practitioners' concern for news decisions is empirically validated by Nimmo (1964) and is possibly the reason

many organizations seek former journalists to fill the ranks of their communication staffs (Cutlip & Center, 1982).

The interest demonstrated by professional journalists also follows pragmatic concerns. As recognized by Lippmann (1922), news value is an ambiguous concept and journalists must make news decisions without the aid of concrete guidelines. He suggests that editorial staffs use conventions when dealing with the raw input of reports and must reduce the number actually presented to the public. To do so, editors rely on a standardized selection process. As journalism began to develop into a profession in the early 1900's, and formalized, university training of journalists was undertaken, concerns about standards for collecting and reporting news became increasingly important (Schudson, 1967). It is unlikely, given the current tendency for public interest groups to challenge media practices and products, that the practitioner's concern over news value has lessened.

Despite some questions concerning whether the news media have the impact suggested above (Klapper, 1960), there seems to be at least the implicit assumption among mass media scholars that the news media have some impact on public knowledge and attitudes, even though such effects may be indirect, long-term, and cumulative. From a practical perspective, news values are important to those who want to influence them (in order to affect public opinion) and to those who want to keep them from being influenced (in order to maintain a free-market place of ideas).

Attempts to define news

It would seem the importance of news decisions would have led to a thorough understanding of news decision making. Yet, news remains a rather poorly defined entity. While several models of news value have been suggested, they have generally been limited in purpose or not consistently supported by empirical investigation.

Catalogs of news value. One way news has been studied by scholars and practitioners is by cataloging the types of stories typically reported in the news media. For example, many journalistic textbooks shy away from giving concrete definitions of news and instead offer lists of topics or typologies of factors that generally make a story newsworthy (Bush, 1954; Cohen, 1973; Cullen, 1981; Gans, 1979; Harriss, Leiter, and Johnson, 1981; Harriss & Stanley, 1965; Johnson, 1926; Johnston, 1979; MacDougall, 1968). Some typically appearing categories or factors include interest, timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, human interest, personal appeal, sympathy, unusualness, progress, conflict, suspense, sex, age, arousal, magnitude of the event, and disasters.

Content analysis. Swanson (1955) reports a study based on a long running project of the Newspaper Research Foundation, Inc. which investigates what people read in newspapers. The study is based on the assumption that newspapers must be read to survive and reports 40 classifications of news stories typically appearing in newspapers.[1] Robeck and Trodahl (cited from Atwood, 1970) report a content analysis of 130 news items that produced eight clusters of news including, front section international news, immediate social system relevance news, comic strips, sports, woman's page, picture page, and opinion page. Stempel (1963) similarly reports factors of suspense-conflict, public affairs, human interest, timely stories, positive or good news, and public controversy. Stempel (1963) identifies six clusters, including suspense-conflict, public affairs, human interest, timely stories, good news, and public controversy. Stempel (1967) reports categories of national politics, immediate reward news, economic activity, public health and welfare, low interest news, conflict, and leisure activity.

Based on statements people made concerning news story content, Anast (1961) identified four clusters of interest in news. One includes foreign news,

politics, economic issues, and social welfare stories. Another involves religion, cultural and entertainment stories, and comics. The third focuses on sports, crime, accidents, and human interest stories. Bush (1960) argues categories should be based on elements of a story pertaining to reader interest and have logical and psychological dimensions. Based on his content analysis and that of Deutschmann (1959), he proposes 56 types or dimensions of news.[2] In a study of reader interest among teen-age boys, Clarke (1968) identified categories of public affairs, speed and violence, speed, teen news, and sports.

These studies and the textbook definitions of news imply that news is a property of the event or information reported and that a journalist need be trained to recognize or identify the news that is already there, awaiting discovery. Sasser and Russell (1972) suggest that an understanding of these typologies of news value is a prerequisite for entry into journalism. They conclude that the resulting agreement on categorization of news should produce standardization of content among news media facing similar news environments. Buckalew (1969) supports Sasser and Russell's hypothesis. He reports considerable agreement on news values held by 12 television news editors judging the news value of 64 stories representing combinations of two levels of normality, two levels of significance, two levels of proximity, two levels of timeliness, and the inclusion or exclusion of visuals. Buckalew (1970, 1974) reports similar findings for radio and television editors.

Gieber (1957) also concludes that news judgments produce little difference concerning selection of wire service copy among the 16 newspapers studied. He suggests, however, that rather than being a function of similarity of news value, the agreement is the result of the passivity of the editors. According to Gieber, the wire desk editors are primarily concerned with the pressures of filling a news hole, are preoccupied with the mechanics of their job, and pay little attention to actual news selection.

Grey (1966) suggests the similarity of news judgments might be the result of journalists validating their decisions with one another. This would make widespread agreement of news decisions a function of the communication system between journalists. Grey's study was confined to reporters in close proximity to one another who had considerable opportunity to communicate. Empirical studies investigating actual newspaper content tend to refute the standardization hypothesis. For example, Stempel (1959) found little agreement on the use of wire service copy by editors of six Michigan daily newspapers. He content analyzed the newspapers during a five day period and concluded that the overall rate of content agreement was less than 33 percent. In an effort to test their own hypothesis, Sasser and Russell (1972) examined the overlap of news coverage by a newspaper, two television stations, and two radio stations in a large metropolitan area. The rate of overlap was quite low, as was the correlation for number of words devoted to subjects and the priority given each.

The disparity between the agreement concerning news values found under experimental conditions and the lack of agreement concerning news judgments found in the field suggests the typology conceptualization is not adequately explaining specific news decisions made by journalists nor explaining why such decisions are made (Atwood, 1970; Whitney, 1980). An alternative perspective is provided by authors who consider news decisions a gatekeeper problem.[3] The gatekeeper model generally places the burden of defining news on the individual journalists and suggests that the gatekeepers are influenced by impartial rules and forces arising from the their positions in social systems. This perspective suggests that news is a product of judgments and not the quality of the event. More specifically, the gatekeeper model suggests that news is a product of individual judgments that are themselves influenced by social systems.

Gatekeeper models. White (1950) provides the first report of a relevant

empirical study using the gatekeeper paradigm. He had a practicing wire service editor on a small-town daily newspaper mark the reasons for excluding all rejected copy during a one week period. White found that the gatekeeper severely reduces the flow of information, and that only 10 percent of the stories entering the desk from the wire were passed to the readers. The gatekeeper White studied did not make news judgments based on rigidly conceived definitions of news worthiness but rather on the relative news value of the stories encountered on any given day. Snider (1967) replicated White's study and reports comparable findings.

The conceptualization of gatekeeping as an individual decision making process and the methodology used by White and Snyder have been subjected to criticism. For example, Brown (1979) challenges White's work on both conceptual and methodological grounds. In general, he argues that White's study misinterprets Lewin's gatekeeping model by focusing entirely on the news values held by the gatekeeper. Lewin's conceptualization of gatekeeping suggests that decisions are based on impartial rules and social factors influencing the occupants of the gates. As such, the gatekeepers do not act autonomously but are highly constrained by their social role (Johnstone, 1976).

Methodologically, White studied gatekeeping by examining the stated reasons why news copy was not passed through the gate, often focusing on idiosyncratic rationales. Brown argues that the social influences and impartial rules are the key to understanding gatekeeping and that as information passes along the news channel, it will increasingly conform to such factors. Therefore, rather than study that which is rejected, he calls for the study of information that is retained. He reports limited support for his prediction that over time news coverage is positively correlated with social trends.

McNelly (1959) also criticizes early gatekeeping studies for their implicit assumption that news selection is a linear function of travel along the news

channel. He argues that the most important and restrictive selections are made at the point of entry into the channel with subsequent gates serving mainly to polish or package the content. He suggests that some thought need be given to the identification of the gatekeepers as well as to the forces acting upon them. Robinson (1970) makes a similar argument with reference to foreign news agencies.

These criticisms reinforce the notion that gatekeeping is more than a function of an editor's or reporter's selective perception (Dimmick, 1974). Dimmick argues that an understanding of news decisions must focus on the news organization rather than the individuals comprising it. His ideas are consistent with Breed's (1955) early study of social forces within the newsroom and Porter's (1968) equation of news gathering with "bureaucratization."

Dimmick's model of gatekeeping is that of an organization attempting to reduce uncertainty.[4] He suggests the news organization perceives its function as an input-output problem and that the daily operation of the newsroom is a two-step process involving sensing the input and reducing it to a fixed level of output. News is therefore that subset of input which is selected by the organization for dissemination to the public. This notion is consistent with Gieber's (1964) claim that "news is what newspaper men make it." The uncertainty reduction proposition offered by Dimmick is also quite similar to the writings of Lippmann, who claims:

> "Without standardization, without stereotypes, without routine judgments, without a fairly ruthless disregard of subtlety, the editor would soon die of excitement....The thing could not be managed at all without systematization, for in a standardized product there is economy of time and effort, as well as a partial guarantee against failure." (1922, p. 222)

Dimmick argues the criteria used by journalists to limit the information they handle are multidimensional and subjective. Stated differently, news decisions are made without concrete guidelines and are instead based on a series of more or less subjective values. If news can be defined at all, Dimmick, like

Gieber (1964), suggests the definition resides in the subjective news values applied by journalists to limit the information they process. The traditional news categories or dimensions described above are likely representative, not of news, but of the news values journalists apply to the selection of information to disseminate to the public or the results of such applications.

In addition to the widely recognized standard news values of timeliness, proximity, etc., discussed above, Dimmick suggests that journalists obtain guidance concerning their news values from one of at least six sources. They can, for example, accept the news values of a respected opinion leader. Research indicates many journalists do rely on the news judgments of others (Breed, 1955b; Grey, 1967; Rivers, 1963). Additionally, journalists sometimes rely on group consensus in determining news value. This method of reducing uncertainty is manifested in the budget or editorial meeting (Dunn, 1969; Tuchman, 1978). News judgments are also dependent upon models set by other journalistic institutions. More specifically, the influence seems to flow from the top down, with journalists in smaller organizations mimicking the news decisions of those of larger size or prominence (Gieber, 1956; Gold & Simmons, 1965; Hardt & White, 1966; Liebes, 1966; Schramm, 1958; Talese, 1969). Perhaps the most significant influence is the formal or informal news policy of the organization itself (Bowers, 1967; Breed, 1955a, 1955b; Donohew, 1974; Epstein, 1973; Gieber, 1960). Journalists can also accept the news decisions of sources (Gieber, 1960; Nimmo, 1964; Rivers, 1963). Finally, they can rely on their own news values and attitudes (Snider, 1967; White, 1950).

Galtung and Ruge (1973) present a similar predictive model of news value after drawing an analogy between journalists' efforts to report news and a radio receiver's ability to capture broadcast signals. Based on the analogy, they argue for twelve dimensions of news value.[5] Generally, they suggest that information is more likely to be considered news if its frequency of occurrence

corresponds with the media production cycle, it obtains a certain threshold of significance, it is unambiguous, is meaningful, has consonance with majority values, is unexpected, involves elite people or nations, and is negative. While their model suggests some innovative and valuable propositions concerning news decisions, the authors do not attempt to incorporate the relevant empirical literature into their writing.[6] Because their propositions are bound by the metaphor, they also fail to address some empirically derived influences on news judgments.

Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1974) take a sociological perspective. They suggest mass media are themselves subsystems of social communication systems that serve as control mechanisms for the larger social system. From this perspective, the important questions, according to the authors, are how the controls are exercised, where they occur, and what impact they have. They further argue that the main purpose of control is system maintenance. For the mass media systems, that process is generally served by feedback, often readership studies. Another purpose of mass media systems is control over the distribution of information.

An important aspect of understanding the news organization, which is also viewed as a system, is the relationship between the members of the newsroom and sources of news. Donohue et al. argue that while the reporter is a professional communicator, he or she rarely has significant input into the policies or decisions of the news organization. Following Edelstein (1966), they suggest reporters have a false status which gives them access to people of high social ranks but which provides them with little personal prestige (Carter, 1958; Tichenor, Donohue, Olien, & Harrison, 1970). They propose that if a reporter seeks status among a news source group, they might submit to considerable control by that group. The authors further suggest that reporters may not

necessarily fulfill their reporting duties with the audience of the media in mind (Gieber, 1967; Pool & Shulman, 1959; Tannenbaum, 1963).

A synthesis of previous research

Each of the above attempts to develop a theoretical understanding of news judgments yet falls short of incorporating the relevant literature into a framework that can be used to both explain the data resulting from the Burgoon et al. studies and predict news decisions made by practicing journalists. These shortcomings result from each being bound by limited purpose and metaphor. For example, Donohue et al. are primarily concerned with the interaction between communication subsystems and focus primarily on source-reporter relationships. Dimmick's uncertainty model stresses the pragmatic concerns of filling the newshole. The radio receiver analogy of Galtung and Ruge is particularly creative, but fails to include some empirically demonstrated influences on actual news judgments.

An additional problem with these previous attempts to define news is that they have generally not been suggestive or supportive of empirical research. For example, while the systems perspective of Donohue et al. has generated some research by Tichenor and his associates (Donohue, Olien & Tichenor, 1974; Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1973; Olien, Donohue & Tichenor, 1968; Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1970, 1973, 1976, 1977; Tichenor, Donohue, Olien & Bowers, 1971; Tichenor, Nnaemeka, Olien & Donohue, 1977; Tichenor, Rodenkirchen, Olien & Donohue, 1973; Tichenor & Wackman, 1973), the perspective has been generally limited to the interaction of source and news media systems.

The following pages present an attempt to define news in terms of propositional statements. An effort is made to take a broad look at influences on news judgments. Based on the three models and previous atheoretical research findings, three main dimensions of news value are proposed to influence the news decisions made by journalists. These include professional factors,

organizational factors, and personal factors.

Professional factors.

Professional factors impacting news decisions probably originate in the historical development of journalism (Emery and Smith, 1954; Mott and Casey, 1937; Mott, 1952; Schudson, 1967; Schiller, 1981). One of these trends reflects the role journalism has traditionally played in this society and is closely related to what Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) label the social responsibility model of the press. Another influence is primarily economic and is based on the necessity of the news media to attract and hold large audiences in order to remain economically viable and free from government control. The third, discussed most thoroughly by Schudson (1967) and Schiller (1981) involves the development of standards of objectivity in judging the collection and reporting of news. The news values resulting from these trends are imposed and enforced by the profession. They are similar to Lewin's notion of impartial rules used to determine what is passed through the gate.

Acts and events. As argued by McNelly (1959), the greatest reduction in information flow through the news channel likely takes place at the point of contact with the environment. That suggests that reporters and assignment editors are likely the persons having the greatest impact on definitions of news because they are responsible for deciding what information enters the channel. As discussed above, Lippmann (1922) and Dimmick (1974) claim journalists in these positions must limit the volume of information they work with and suggest that they do so in a systematic manner. Lippmann argues that journalists are more likely to report information if it takes some definable form. Only concrete, observable information is generally recognized by reporters and editors and therefore separated from the larger landscape of routine information.

The most common form taken by news is the overt event or act that touches some means of record. The more points at which an act or event can be sensed, measured, and recorded, the greater the likelihood it will be noticed and reported. Tuchman's (1978) concern with the effect of the "newsnet" on reporting and editing decisions seems consistent with this conceptualization as does Boorstin's (1971) writings concerning the compelling nature of "pseudo-events."

Schudson (1967) and Schiller (1981) provide historical explanations for the journalistic practice of reporting concrete information and suggest journalists' definitions of objectivity are consistent with and may be responsible for this reliance on event reporting. Schudson argues the who, what, when, where, why format of most reporting necessarily stresses concrete information. Strictly followed, the traditional style of reporting, challenged by the "new journalists" (Wolfe, 1973), nearly precludes reporting abstract ideas or information not amenable to the five-W format.

Park (1955b, 1967b) appears to be in general agreement with the news-as-event definition. He attempts to define news using the distinction between "acquaintance with" and "knowledge about" suggested by William James (1896). The former form of knowledge is that based on individual experience and is likened to common-sense or personal understanding. "Knowledge about" is more formal, rational, and is generally the product of systematic investigation and involves the substitution of concepts for empirical reality. Park views news as occupying a distinct position between the two extreme forms of knowledge and as being somewhat closer to "acquaintance with" (Frazier and Gaziano, 1979; Park, 1967b). He suggests that news is much like history, the difference centering on the emphasis each places on the relationship between events. While history is concerned primarily with relationships, news focuses almost entirely on the events themselves and is presented to the public in the form of segmented

reports.

Meyer's (1973) call for precision journalism suggests that reporters should apply more systematic methods of reporting. To the extent precision journalism has been adopted by journalists, news might be moving more toward the "knowledge about" end of the continuum suggested by Park. Atkin and Gaudino (1984) review literature that suggests the increasing use of public opinion polling may be adding a new type of information to that typically reported by journalists. They argue that poll data represent an objective form of information concerning topics otherwise accessible to reporters by less reliable, more subjective reporting methods. The authors suggest that polling data fits neatly into the traditional definition of news as concrete, objective information, especially that relating to political topics.

These arguments lead to the following propositional statements concerning news value:

> Proposition 1: The more information takes on a concrete, definable form the more likely it will be considered news (Gieber, 1960a, 1960b; Lippmann, 1922; Park, 1967b).
>
> Proposition 1a: The more information is represented as an overt act or event the more likely it is to be considered news (Boorstin, 1971; Lippmann, 1922).
>
> Proposition 1b: The more information is represented in objective form as a product of a scientific methodology the more likely it is to be considered news (Atkin & Gaudino, 1984; Meyer, 1973).

Timeliness. The news as objective information definition represents an initial, major screening of information. It is obvious that additional reduction must and does take place. As Lippmann argues, "all the reporters in all the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world" (1922, p. 214).

Park (1955b, 1967b) suggests an additional limitation is the news media's concern with the "specious present," a relative, perishable period of time.

Again, the history of journalism provides some insight into why journalists appear so concerned with the timeliness of the information they collect and disseminate. It is obvious that the first newspapers were not obsessed with timeliness, perhaps because they focused their attention more on ideas than on events and because they often had to wait days or months for reports to reach their offices. But, as communication technology advanced and the mass circulation newspapers began competing for large audiences, the "scoop" became an important yardstick by which news was judged.

The news media today still attempt to scoop one another, as evidenced by the network news organizations' efforts to announce the outcome of national elections ahead of their competition. Bailey and Litchy (1972) write about the effort of one news organization to hire motorcycle drivers and charter aircraft to race news materials from the field to processing offices.

Galtung and Ruge (1973) suggest that timeliness is relative to the production cycle of the media. Again, basing their ideas on the radio receiver metaphor, they conclude that the more similar the frequency of the event is to the production schedule of the news media, the more likely the information will be considered newsworthy. Certainly, practical wisdom among public relations practitioners suggests that news conferences, pseudo-events, and news releases should be planned with media production schedules in mind (Cutlip & Center, 1982).

Park (1955a, 1967b) suggests that timeliness is also based on something he labels as "news interest." In defining this latter quality of information, he relies heavily on Dana's claim that news is "something that will make people talk." Park therefore defines news as being the report of information people find interesting.

Park distinguishes between two types of stories based on interest; one he

defines as news and the other as "human interest." He recognizes that "human interest" stories are disseminated primarily to entertain. Typically, such editorial material represents a telling of universal and timeless conditions of life. These "human interest" stories are selected to satisfy what he perceives to be the common person's need for immediate gratification. The timeliness of hard news, according to Park, is based on an interest derived from the information's importance to or impact on the audience. This type of timeliness is firmly grounded in the pragmatic. In Park's words:

> "....news has to do with events in a real world and gets whatever importance it has from that fact....It is this notion of importance which seems, finally, to be the distinctive and determining specification in the conception of news. Events, if they are to have for the reader the character of news, must not be merely interesting but important. Importance seems, however, to be a quality like hot and cold; that is, relative to time and space....What is news at one time is not news at another, because the events recorded have ceased to be interesting. History is quite often as interesting as news. But the events history records have ceased to be important because there is nothing one can do about them. On the other hand, when there is nothing to be done about the events recorded in the newspaper they have ceased to be news" (1955a, p. 110).

These arguments lead to additional propositions concerning news decisions.[7] These can be stated as follows:

> Proposition 2: Information that is timely is more likely to be considered by journalists to be newsworthy than is information that is not considered to be timely (Bailey & Litchy, 1972; Casey & Copeland, 1958 Galtung & Ruge, 1963; Parks, 1955b, 1967a).
>
> Proposition 2a: Information coming to the attention of journalists as a result of happenings occurring during the present are more likely to be considered timely than is information coming to the attention of journalists as a result of happenings not occurring during the present (Park, 1955b, 1967a).
>
> Proposition 2b: Timeliness is partially defined by the production cycle of the news media, and information coming to the attention of reporters during a single production cycle of the media is more likely to be considered timely than information unfolding across several production periods (Casey & Copeland, 1958; Galtung & Ruge, 1963).
>
> Proposition 2c: Timeliness is partially determined by the relevance of the information to the audience of the news media such that information considered relevant is more likely to be considered timely than information that is not considered relevant (Park, 1955a, 1967a).

> Proposition 2d: Relevance is partially determined by the pragmatics of the information such that information considered to impact the audience or over which they have some control is more likely to be considered relevant than information which does not impact their lives or over which they have no control (Park, 1955b, 1967a).

Interest and Importance. The above discussion of timeliness introduces the factors of interest and importance. Burgoon et al. (1982a) suggest that interest and importance are the main criteria used by journalists in making news decisions. More specifically, most journalists feel it their duty to inform their audience about information the audience "ought to know." This social responsibility felt by most journalists likely results from the history of the profession discussed earlier. The "ought to know" information is generally defined by journalists to be that having importance to or impact on the lives of the audience. The interesting information, or the "want to know" news, is also considered newsworthy by many journalists, often because it is judged necessary to the economic survival of the news organization. This type of information is similar to the "human interest" story discussed by Park (1967b).

It is probably because interest and importance are such general and ambiguous qualities that journalists are thought to seek concrete guidance. It is also likely that the typologies provided by journalism texts are attempts to provide professional standards for identifying the information that is important and interesting to the audience served by the organization. Rather than defining news as suggested by the textbook authors, these attributes more likely guide the journalist by helping to mark items that have probable interest or importance to the audience.

For example, Galtung and Ruge (1963) suggest that importance is similar to the amplitude of a broadcast signal. The bigger the information in terms of magnitude of impact on the audience, the more likely it will come to the attention of the news media. Similarly, events occurring close to an audience or

involving prominent people are more likely to have an impact or to be considered interesting.

Interest and impact are not necessarily independent of each other. Important information is likely of interest to an audience. Many of the journalists interviewed by Burgoon et al. (1982a), however, make a distinction between the two dimensions and express a concern that the public is not always interested in important information. Rather, many of the journalists interviewed perceived many members of the audience to be interested in "puff" or "human interest" types of stories. Some journalists claim it to be their responsibility to package important news such that the audience will find it interesting.

Conceptualized in this manner, impact and interest are similar to the categorization of news offered by Schramm (1949). He suggests that news can be classified as to whether it provides the audience with immediate or delayed rewards. Immediate rewards are those received at the time of exposure to a news item. Delayed rewards are benefits received from the information at some later point in time. This notion of news takes a reader rather than reporter perspective and suggests the audience may influence news decisions.

It seems reasonable that if news is generally that which is of interest or importance to the audience of a news medium, that interest and impact should be defined in terms of that audience. Therefore, what is news for one medium might not necessarily be news for another serving a different audience. Wicker (1978) writes that newspapers are reflections of the communities they serve because they are sensitive to both local economic influences and to the interests of and lifestyles of their audiences. These influences would partially explain the lack of agreement of news selections by editors who tend to agree on news values.

A number of studies indicate that perceptions of interest and importance

are different for audience, journalists, and other professionals in the news channel. For example, Johnson (1963) investigated the news priorities of scientists, science writers, editors, and readers. In general, he found that all but the editors were in agreement concerning news decisions. He suggests that all share the same general news definitions, but that the editors place importance on values not necessarily in proportion to others in the channel. Student newspapers were the topic of a similar study by Bornholdt (1966). He found that while the factors of importance and interest accounted for most of the news judgments, students had very different perceptions of which stories fit those categories. He concludes that journalists may have an inaccurate image of audience interests.

Clearly, Burgoon et al. (1982a) indicate that many journalists have an inaccurate image of their audience's news media habits. Perhaps because of negative perceptions of the audience, not all journalists believe the audience is in a position to judge what is important, and some say it is the responsibility of journalists to make such decisions because they have special training and knowledge (Burgoon et al., 1982a). It therefore follows that an important element relative to audience influence is the amount and quality of feedback the journalist gets concerning audience needs and interests and the role such information plays in the journalists' news decisions (Burgoon et al., 1982a). They suggest that a number of pressures, including the need to move frequently in order to obtain career advances, the desire to remain objective, and an elitist attitude tend to isolate the reporter, and to a lesser extent the editor, from the community served by the medium. As the separation increases, reporters and editors may increasingly use objective standards or stereotypic conceptualizations of the audience to judge the impact or interest potential of an item of information.

In addition to stressing textbook typologies, the ambiguous nature of interest and importance might cause journalists to seek guidance and confirmation from their colleagues, superiors, and other media. Breed (1955a) interviewed 120 journalists responsible for news decisions and concluded that journalists are avid readers and that they tend to copy one another's news decisions, a suggestion also made by Sasser and Russell (1972). Schramm (1958) reports that such influence seems to flow downward, from larger newspapers to smaller ones.

This suggests that certain topics might become "hot," meaning that coverage by an influential news organization will likely signal others to cover the same topic. This also suggests that because some topics, such as political affairs and international events, are significantly covered by many news organizations, subsequent information on these topics is assumed to be newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge, 1973).

The above discussion suggests the following propositions:

Proposition 3: Information judged by journalists to be interesting or important to the audience served by the news organization is more likely to be considered newsworthy than is information judged by journalists to be unimportant or uninteresting to the audience served (Atwood, 1970; Badii & Ward, 1974; Buckalew, 1969; Casey & Copeland, 1958; Kariel & Rosenvall, 1957; Stempel, 1967; Tuchman, 1979).[8]

Proposition 3a: Journalists' perception of the importance of information is positively correlated with their perception of the magnitude of the impact on the audience's lives and the number of lives affected (Atwood, 1970; Galtung & Ruge, 1973).

Proposition 3b: Journalists will tend to judge psychologically and physically proximate information as more important or interesting than non proximate information, all else being equal (Buckalew, 1969, 1970, 1974; Jones, Trodahl & Hvistendahl, 1961; MacLean & Pina, 1967;).

Proposition 3c: Journalists will tend to judge information involving prominent persons, places, or objects as more important or interesting than information about ordinary people, places, or objects, all else being equal (Atwood, 1970; Badii & Ward, 1974; Galtung & Ruge, 1974).

Proposition 3d: The greater the perception by journalists that the audience will identify with the information or gain immediate reward from exposure to the information (e.g., information about human conditions,

fears, and experience) the more likely it will be considered by journalists to be interesting to the audience, all else being equal (Bornholdt, 1963; Park, 1967b; Schramm, 1949).

Proposition 3e: Journalists will tend to judge unusual or odd information as being more interesting to the audience than common place information, all else being equal (Atwood, 1970; Badii & Ward, 1974; Bornholdt, 1963; Buckalew, 1969, 1970, 1974).

Proposition 4: The judgments of importance and interest made by journalists may not necessarily correspond to the judgments of importance and interest made by the audience of the news organization (Atwood, 1970; Johnson, 1963; Lassahn, 1967; Lindley, 1974).

Proposition 5: Journalists uncertain about their audience's perceptions of importance and interest will tend to look for guidance from colleagues, especially those in higher status positions; from textbook categories of news value; from models established by other news organizations; or from sources of information (Atwood & Grotta, 1973; Buckalew, 1969; Breed, 1955b; Cutlip, 1954; Gold & Simmons, 1965; Grey, 1966; Lippmann, 1922; Schramm, 1958).

Organizational factors

As has been suggested, journalists often do not make news decisions independent of other persons within the news organization. To fully understand the decisions made by journalists, it is necessary to examine the newsroom environment for the social rules discussed in Lewin's gatekeeper model. Such influences are socially enforced and likely differ across news organizations.

Feedback. Feedback likely plays a role in defining the journalists' conception of the audience's perceptions of interest and importance (Dimmick, 1974). The amount of feedback received by journalists is partially a function of organizational factors such as the presence or absence of a ombudsman or readership committee and the degree to which audience research is valued and shared in the newsroom. Burgoon et. al. (1982a) report that audience feedback does not always get to the reporters, even in newsrooms conducting extensive readership interest and preference studies. They also report considerable variance in the use of feedback.

Burgoon et al. (1982a) report a number of factors that are related to isolation of journalists. Their general conclusion is that many journalists are

isolated from the audiences they serve so have no direct experience on which to base judgments of interest and importance. Given the notion that journalists attempt to meet the audience's conception of importance and interest and given the assumption that feedback influences the accuracy of their perception, the following tentative propositions are suggested:

> Proposition 6: Audience feedback influences a journalists news decisions by providing input concerning the audience's perceptions of interest and importance.
>
> Proposition 6a: Judgments of importance and interest among reporters and editors working in organizations promoting contact between the staff and the audience served will agree with audience perceptions of interest and importance more than will those of reporters and editors working in organizations not promoting contact between the staff and the audience served.
>
> Proposition 6b: The perceptions of interest and importance of journalists working in news organizations promoting audience readership/preference research, readership committees, ombudsman activities, or similar feedback channels will agree more with the audience perceptions of interest and importance than will those of journalists working in organizations not promoting such feedback, all else being equal.

Resource Allocations. Other organizational factors may have a more direct influence on news decisions. Lippmann (1922) suggests that information is more likely to be considered news if an apparatus of recording it is present, implying that beat assignments and staffing size might have some impact on news decisions. Tuchman (1978) reports one of the more thorough case studies of newsroom operations. She concurs that beat assignments influence news judgments and argues that news organizations systematically produce routines of reporting based on their production cycle and anticipated places and times of newsworthy occurrences. The actual structure of this "newsnet" determines, in part, what information is reported.

Atkin and Gaudino (1984) review literature suggesting that the allocation of resources positively affects the use of poll related information. They suggest a news organization is more likely to use poll data if the

organization's time or money has been expended to obtain it. One explanation is that the use of poll related information is centralized with the editor who feels a necessity to justify the decision to expend resources. Tuchman (1978) describes a similar need of reporters to see results from their efforts. She points out that a reporter's status is partially defined in terms of the amount of material used by a news organization and the type of play it receives. That suggests reporters will produce news reports if they expend time and energy to collect information and that they will seek the information that will receive the greatest play by their news organization.

Whitney (1980) suggests that the operations of most newsrooms involve the processing of relatively fixed amounts of input with fixed amounts of resources to produce fixed levels of output. He argues the newsroom situation is generally one of adaptation to conditions of information overload and underload. In the latter case, the news organization will produce output by following up on tips and searching for new angles. In cases of overload, the newsroom will cue and prioritize input, taking only the most newsworthy and then process them into suitable output. In a case analysis of a newsroom under pressure of deadline, he also found that some structural changes take place within the editorial staff to compensate for overload conditions. These suggestions are similar to those made by Grey (1966) following a similar case study.

These studies suggest, as does the survey performed by Burgoon et al., that news decisions are relative judgments and partially dependent on both the news day, the size and capability of the news organization, and the amount of news the organization can and must process during a given production cycle. Rather than making dichotomous decisions concerning news value, it is likely that journalists prioritize events and select only the most newsworthy for dissemination during a given production cycle.

The following propositions are suggested:

Proposition 7: Most news organizations have a relatively fixed amount of output and resources, making the final news judgments relative rather than categorical decisions (Dimmick, 1974; Grey, 1966; Jones, Trodahl & Hvistendahl, 1961; Whitney, 1980).

Proposition 7a: Information for which a news organization, a reporter, or an editor expends resources is more likely to be considered news than is information for which the news organization does not expend such resources (Atkin & Gaudino, 1984; Tuchman, 1978).

Proposition 7b: Information is more likely to be considered news as the available input is reduced or the output is expanded (Whitney, 1980).

Proposition 7c: Information is more likely to be considered news if it meets the mechanical or pragmatic needs of the news organization (Gieber, 1955, 1964; Snider, 1967; White, 1950).

Lines of Authority. Some limited evidence suggests journalists are influenced by persons occupying positions of higher authority within their news organizations. While reporters claim to have considerable autonomy in the execution of their jobs, the Burgoon et al. studies report that journalists' perceptions of some categories of information differ significantly from what they perceive to be their newspapers' evaluation of the same material. While the differences between self perceptions of news priorities and perceptions of the newspapers' priorities are smaller for persons in supervisory positions, they are still present and significant. This suggests reporters may be collecting news based on their supervisors' or their publishers' news values rather than their own, a conclusion many admit.

Bowers (1967) suggests that economic conditions affecting the news organization might affect the autonomy of reporters and editors. He surveyed managing editors concerning the influence their publishers exercise on news decision. In general, they report the influence attempted by publishers increases with the proximity of the event to the local market and with the likelihood the coverage of the event would have an economic impact on the newspaper.

One way in which information can have an economic impact on the news organization is by affecting the likelihood advertisers will buy space or time. Little empirical evidence is available to support a claim that advertisers influence news decisions. Wicker (1978) reports that the news decisions of small town newspapers reflect the influence of economically powerful citizens or organizations. Bailey and Litchy (1972) claim that standards of taste were considered by journalists making news decisions concerning the use of the graphic film of an execution. That decision may reflect a concern for the potential impact a violation would have on audience or advertisers.

The competitive environment in which the news organization operates may also play a part in news judgments. For example, Bailey and Litchy (1972) suggest that the exclusivity of the execution film positively influenced the decision to air it. Similarly, the likelihood that a competitive news organization has or will use the information increases the newsworthiness of the information, at least until the competition actually uses it. An example of the latter is proved by emphasis the Detroit Free Press placed on the environmental effects of dioxin pollution in 1983. Managing editors acknowledge that the story was being overplayed because the major competitor in the market, the Detroit News, would likely run the story (Everett, 1983). Again, the Burgoon et al. (1982a) study partially supports this claim.

Tuchman (1978) provides a possible explanation for the downward influence on news decisions. She argues that success in the trade depends partially on the amount and nature of space or time a journalist's report receives. Because use-no use decisions are usually made by persons further along the news channel, reporters try to conform to the standards of such decision-makers. Tuchman also suggests that interpersonal influence plays a role in news decisions. Pointing out that most news decisions at major news organizations are made by committee, she argues that the persuasiveness of the proponent of the news story will

influence the final decision concerning its relative news value. It can then be deduced that reporters with a keen sense of organizational politics will attempt to get influential editors to represent them in budget meetings. The ultimate news value of information therefore depends partially on which reporter or editor collects it and rates its news value. It can also be argued that because decisions are made in informal information channels, some bargaining will focus on agendas not relating directly to the newsworthiness of the information.

These arguments suggest the following propositions:

Proposition 8: In competitive news markets the news decisions of one news organization will influence the news decisions of others with the same or similar audiences (Burgoon et al., 1982a; Dimmick, 1974; Rosten, 1937; Schramm, 1958; Talese, 1969; Tuchman, 1974).

Proposition 9: The news decisions of journalists will conform to the perceived news values of persons in the news organization occupying positions of higher authority or to organizational policy (Breed, 1955b; Donohew, 1967; Judd, 1961; Leibes, 1966; Tuchman, 1979).

Proposition 9a: The news decisions of reporters and editors who are concerned with their career advancement within the news organization or identify with the news organization or its goals will more likely conform to the news values of persons of higher authority within the news organization or with organizational policies than will the news decisions of journalists not so concerned, all else being equal (Breed, 1955b; Burgoon et al., 1982a; Judd, 1961).

Proposition 9b: Persons occupying positions of authority in a news organization are more likely to exert their formal authority concerning news judgments in situations involving information having a potential economic impact on the news organization than in situations involving information without such impact (Atwood & Grotta, 1973; Bowers, 1967; Gieber, 1960).

Proposition 9c: The news decisions of a news organization are more likely to reflect news values of persuasive members of the news organization than non-persuasive members (Tuchman, 1978).

Personal factors

Very few studies have investigated the the journalists' personal bias in deciding news value, perhaps because journalists claim objectivity and resist suggestions to the contrary. There is evidence that journalists allow personal biases to intrude on news decisions in at least three ways.

First, there is limited evidence suggesting that reporters favor certain types of news stories. White's (1950) initial gatekeeper study indicates that although "Mr. Gates" claims objectivity, he excludes some information because it concerns subjects favoring alternative points-of-view to his own. Snider's (1967) replication resulted in similar conclusions.

Another, more subtle influence is that affecting the journalists' perceptions of their audience. Contrary to Pool and Shulman (1964), Burgoon et. al. (1982a) report that journalists often use themselves as a guide for determining the interest or importance of information and then prepare their stories again using themselves as a reference for the audience. Earlier, it was suggested that one reason for the isolation of journalists from their audience served was an elitist attitude. Again, it seems reasonable to assume that the degree to which journalists adopt such an attitude may vary across individuals and be partially determined by personality traits.

Finally, Galtung and Ruge (1973) suggest there may be different ways of determining relative news value, given the above influences. For example, a reporter or editor might use a compensatory decision model in which the attributes of news value are weighted and summed. The information receiving the highest score is most likely considered news. On the other hand, the journalists might use a noncompensatory model in which the information is required to possess certain attributes.

This very limited evidence suggests the following propositions:

Proposition 10: Information reflecting the values of the journalist recording the information will more likely be considered newsworthy than will information not reflecting those values (Snider, 1967; White, 1950)

Proposition 10a: The news decisions of journalists isolated from the audience served will more likely conform to personally held values than will the news decisions of journalists not so isolated.

Proposition 10b: The likelihood that journalists will feel isolation from their audience as a result of elitism will vary with personality traits and

abilities of the journalists (Carter, 1958; Jones, 1954; Jones & Swanson, 1954; Stone, 1953).

Proposition 10c: The likelihood that journalists will adopt the news values of sources depends upon journalists' need for social or professional acceptance by the source or source group (Tichenor & Wackman, 1973; Tichenor et al, 1971; 1976; 1977).

Discussion

The above set of propositions represent an initial attempt to define news. Essentially, the framework of propositions describing news judgments center around two constructs, importance and interest. Most other news judgments are thought to follow from the journalists perceptions of these two news dimensions. The value of the propositions rests in the acknowledgment that journalists fulfill duties that are, on one hand, pragmatic and, on the other, socially responsible.

The weaknesses of the set of propositions are three. First, they are neither logically interconnected nor exhaustive of the influences on news. Many, in fact, raise more issues than they clarify. For example, Proposition 5 suggests that when faced with ambiguity concerning the interest and importance of information, journalists will seek guidance from a number of potential sources. While Propositions 6 through 6c suggest organizational factors that influence the ambiguity experienced by journalists, little clarification is provided concerning where the journalists will most likely seek guidance. The propositions also likely fail to include all the factors influencing news. For example, little is understood concerning such factors as the life-cycle of a news item. As Galtung and Ruge suggest, previous news coverage of a topic likely makes subsequent coverage more likely, until the subject becomes old hat or stale.

The second weakness of the set of propositions is that the relative weight of the factors is not clarified. For example, given the pull between pragmatic and socially responsible reporting, which is the journalist most likely to

engage? Which has the more weight, the journalist's own news values, or those of others in the news organization? To what extent is the journalist's news decisions motivated by private desires for the fame and fortune that can accompany a major effort in investigative reporting (Downie, 1976).

The third weakness of the set of propositions is that they specify influences in inter-event news decisions and not on intra-event reporting. Stated differently, they do not clarify what is reported concerning a given topic selected for coverage nor how that information is presented to the public. The intra-event decisions are likely as important as the inter-event. As Westley and MacLean (1958) suggest, the journalist acts as a link or communicator between the environment (including objects, behavior, and other communication) and the receiver. Important questions become both which aspects of the environment the communicator selects for presentation and how the presentation is made. While some of the propositions likely apply to intra-event and stylistic decisions, the specific nature of the influences awaits further specification.

An additional benefit of the propositional format offered above is related to these weaknesses. While the propositions fall short of a theory of news judgments, they do draw together the rather extensive empirical literature on news value and news gatekeeping. Even more important, they suggest the study of news decisions might best be undertaken from the perspective suggested by Westley and MacLean. That is, because of their social importance and because of the nature of the selection and dissemination process, news judgments are best studied as a problem involving communication rather than purely journalistic concerns.

The propositional framework offered here, while far short of a theory, does suggest an incorporation of other perspectives and disciplines into the study of

news decisions. As argued earlier, the previous models were largely limited by their purpose or metaphor. By relating news decisions to the dimensions of interest and importance, the question becomes how the journalists define those terms and what influences those definitions. The influences on that process highlighted by the propositions suggest the need to incorporate research from such varied fields as organizational communication, personnel management, personality theory, and cognitive psychology.

This attempt to define news is therefore far from complete. It is actually a beginning of a project rather than a completion. It also suggests the research undertaken by Burgoon et al. (1982a, 1982b) represents a valuable addition to the literature on news decisions by reporting on the organizational, informational, and personal influences on news judgments. The weakness of the studies is simply their failure to adequately conceptualize news prior to the investigation of influences acting upon it. Had that task been accomplished, many of the questions raised by the propositions developed here could have been more thoroughly answered.

NOTES

1. The categories include: comics, war, defense, fire-disaster, human interest, weather, individual, major crime, social significance, consumer information, science-invention, popular art, vital statistics, health-safety, private charity-benevolence, leisure activities, accidents, loyalty investigations, international relations-political, international relations-economic and social, local government, labor, entertainment, politics, home-family, business and industry, civil and judicial affairs, tastes, social relations, fine arts, sports, state government, minor crimes, religion, country correspondence, agriculture, and finance.

2. The categories include: people well known, people not well known, people in groups, Hollywood, our community or religion, our nation, our allies, our enemies, other nations, governmental acts, politics, rebellion, defense, atomic bomb or energy, diplomacy and foreign relations, economic activity, prices, taxes, major labor, minor labor, agriculture, civil judicial proceedings, crime, communism in the U.S.A., sex, first order accidents and disasters, second order accidents and disasters, third order accidents and disasters, social and safety measures, race relations, money, personal health, public health, science and invention, religion, philanthropy, weather, natural deaths, transportation, education, welfare of children, cute children, animals, marriage and marital relations, amusements, the arts and culture, and human interest.

3. According to Gieber (1964), the theoretical basis for the gatekeeper model comes primarily from Lewin (1947, 1951). Influences can also be found in the mass media research model suggested by Wesley and McClean (1957). Gieber suggests that there are three main influences on a journalist's news decision: personal values, audience values, and newsroom values.

4. The model of gatekeeping suggested by Dimmick can be criticized for taking too pragmatic a look at journalists. That is, the assumption is made that the journalist is singularly concerned with the practical aspects of reporting. He therefore pays little if any attention to the professional standards or a sense of social responsibility (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). While this criticism can be applied to all the models outlined in this section, it is most obvious in that proposed by Dimmick.

5. The dimensions of news suggested by Galtung and Ruge follow from their broadcast receiver analogy. They suggest: a. If the frequency of the signal is outside the dial it will not be recorded. b. The stronger the signal, the greater the amplitude, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening too. c. The more clear and unambiguous the signal, the more probable that it will be considered as worth listening to. d. The more meaningful the signal, the more likely it will be considered as worth listening to. e. The more consonant the signal is with the mental image of what one expects to find, the more probable it will be recorded as worth listening to. f. The more unexpected the signal, the more probable that it will be considered as worth listening to. g. If one signal has been tuned in to, it will likely continue to be tuned in to. h. The more a signal has been tuned in to, the more probable that a very different kind of signal will be recorded as worth listening to next time. i. The more the event concerns an elite nation, the more probable it will be news. j. The more the event concerns elite people, the more probable it will be news. k. The more the event can be seen in personal terms, the more likely it will be news. l. The more negative the

event in consequences, the more probable it will be news.

6. Gieber (1955) suggests newspapers do not overplay negative news.

7. The proposition relating timeliness to news value are, on the surface, contrary to the findings of Burgoon et al. (1982a). Relatively few journalists defined news as timely information. This is perhaps because timeliness is a taken for granted quality of news.

8. Interest and importance as used here are synonymous with Schramm's (1949) immediate reward and delayed reward, respectively. According to Badii and Ward (1974, p. 244) immediate reward refers to an "account of any physical or non-physical event in which a large number of readers participate and receive immediate satisfaction. A reward is gained at once. Readers face a minimum of tension while reading the story; they can identify themselves with the story. It satisfies readers' curiosity about what other people are doing and enables them to share vicariously the experience of others without any dangers or stress involved. It thrills, surprises, shocks, titillates, creates sympathy or aversion." Delayed reward refers to an "account of any physical or non-physical event in which a large number of readers participate and receive delayed reward. Reward would be gained later, if any reward be gained at all. It sometimes requires the reader to endure unpleasantness or annoyance. It would create tension within the reader. The story contains an element of discomfort, because it forces people to consider matters that may have grim consequences; its reward lies in its informing people about, and preparing them to meet, the problems of life.

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